

THE MYSTERY OF THE THREE



Mrs.
W.R.
DAVIDSON

THE
DAVIDSON
RINGS

A true detective story that rivals in its dramatic intensity all the marvelous exploits of Vidocq, Lecoq or Sherlock Holmes

A WOMAN passenger on a steamer five miles off Sandy Hook removed her rings to wash her hands. She placed them on the marble of the wash basin and was absent from the room for two minutes. On her return the rings were gone.

There were five hundred people on the steamer. It was impossible to accuse any individual.

Yet, despite the seeming impossibilities in the way the husband recovered the rings within two months.

Circumstance provided for the return of the rings before they were stolen in the exchange of addresses between two women.

And yet before they were returned to the owner a score of people, from a quiet little fishing village in the extreme eastern part of Maine to wire-pulling politicians in Philadelphia were affected.

On Saturday, August 22, 1903, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Davidson, of New York, embarked on the steamer *Cygnus* to witness the international yacht races off Sandy Hook.

Some five hundred pleasure seekers were on hand, comprising the usual New York holiday crowd.

The boat had hardly arrived at the scene of the races when Mrs. Davidson went below to the ladies' saloon to bathe her face with cold water, hoping thereby to arrest seasickness.

She removed her diamond rings, three in number, before putting her hands in the water. She laid them on the marble wash basin, and had returned to the upper deck before she missed them. Instantly she rushed back to the saloon.

The rings had vanished.

Nor did the stewardess or any of the sympathetic lady passengers have them. Heartick, she returned to the upper deck and told her husband of her misfortune.

"My engagement ring," she said. "It represents the beginning of our happiness. I shall never, never be happy again until it is returned." Such a sentiment is worthy of the greatest efforts a man can put forth. It touched the determination of the husband.

"If it is within human possibility," said Mr. Davidson to himself, "I shall recover those rings."

To his wife he said: "Don't worry, little woman. I'll see what can be done." Mr. Davidson is conservative.

The captain was approached. He offered his services and his desire to assist in recovery of the rings. A woman who had fought seasickness heroically with a whiskey flask excited suspicion. After much argument, which did little to inform popular opinion, she submitted to search. Nothing was found.

No Clue Apparent.

Cards were posted throughout the ship, offering reward. They proved unavailing.

That night, when the steamer approached her dock the captain allowed a friend of Mr. Davidson to land before the steamer reached her pier. He telephoned to the nearest police station and had a detective at the boat when the passengers landed.

No suspicious or known crooked characters were seen.

On the way home that night Mr. Davidson stopped to place the ad, exhibit 1, in the *Herald* lost and found column.

Reluctant and with heavy hearts the Davidsons reached their home without the rings. The wife inconsolable, the husband baffled. Hope died out with the sinking of the sun; it was ever so.

Sunday Mr. Davidson ordered the ad,

exhibit two, to be inserted in Monday's paper.

No mental condition endures forever. By Monday the Davidson family had become reconciled to its ringless condition. It's easier for a man to forget, however, than for a woman, and the mental distress began to show its effects upon the wife.

Upon arriving at his office Monday morning, Mr. Davidson found the package (exhibit 3) in his mail. Upon opening it he found printed in lead pencil (exhibit 4) "Please adv. in Tuesday's *Herald* for two rings, so I will know

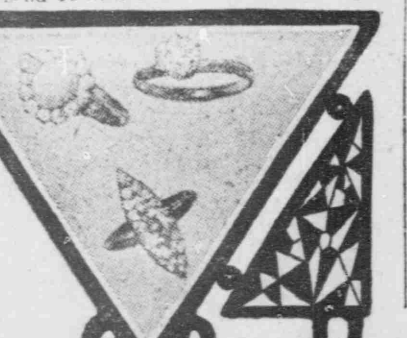
LOST—On steamer *Cygnus*, at yacht races, on Saturday, 22nd inst., three valuable rings. No questions asked, and liberal reward paid on return to W. R. DAVIDSON, 18 East 23d st.

EXHIBIT-1.

you got this on Wednesday," and tucked in one corner of the package, the smallest of the three rings. The box, as could be seen by the cancellation stamp, was posted at Station H, New York, corner of Forty-fifth street and Lexington avenue.

The prompt return of the smallest ring, the disguised writing, the suggestion of advertising, all pointed to one thing, a shrewd and experienced extortioner.

The cleverness of the move is apparent. The natural impulse would be to write a description of the ring, saying send reward and I will return ring.



But to return one as evidence of good faith, saying "Advertise for the other two," displayed subtleties unusual.

The ad shown in exhibit 5, was immediately displayed in the *Herald*, and the following day the following letter, exhibit 6, came to Mr. Davidson:

"Saw notice O. K. in Tuesday's *Herald*. Send reward to E. Marston, care Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Maine."

In one corner is written "and oblige finder of green and diamond ring (2) diamonds and three emeralds." This letter was postmarked New York, and mailed near Christopher street ferry.

Mr. Davidson was now convinced that he was negotiating with shrewd parties with far reaching influence. However, he wrote the following letter:

New York, Aug. 27, 1903.

"E. Marston, — Harbor, Me.

"Care Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Me. "In response to yours at hand find herewith check payable to yourself or bearer, to the amount of \$25.

"Of course in sending same, you ap-

LOST—Last Saturday on steamer *Cygnus*, two valuable rings. Lib. ret. reward on return to W. R. DAVIDSON, 18 East 23d st.

EXHIBIT-2.

prelate the fact that I am carrying out your instructions and relying upon you to return to me the identical rings.

"As I have had no previous dealings of this nature, I am unaware if the amount sent will be regarded by you as being sufficient to offset your trouble in the matter, but if not, advise me as to same, and on receipt or delivery of package with two identical rings, the amount will immediately be handed or sent to you."

Mr. Davidson awaited impatiently for five days, and then, anxiety conquering, he placed another advertisement in the personal column of the *Herald*. The same day, September 2, he received the following letter (exhibit 7):

"Address all communications to E. Marston, care Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Me.

"W. R. Davidson, 23d Street: "Received your letter and check. I



EXHIBITS 3 AND 4—Box in which the first ring was returned and the note that accompanied it

said nothing whatsoever about any other rings.

"Will hold the check till I hear from you whether the \$25 was a reward for all or one-third of the number of rings, because if it is for all I am not entitled to it, for I returned only one.

"Kindly communicate entirely by mail, as I will be unable to see the *Herald* or any other New York paper."

A Mysterious Letter.

Then followed this in lead pencil: "Please let me hear from you soon."

This letter was posted in East Orange, N. J. It's a far cry from — Harbor, Me., to Orange. This and the extraordinary character of the letter completely mystified Mr. Davidson.

After some deliberation he wrote the following letter:

New York, Sept. 2, 1903.

"E. Marston, care of Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Me.

"Thanks for your letter just received and appreciated. Fearing that my letter to you with check might have miscarried, and the enclosed self-explanatory notice placed in to-day's *Herald*.

"With reference to the check sent, same can be retained and used by you for your kindness in sending the one ring received.

"As the other two rings have associations that are dear to my wife, one being her engagement ring, will pay \$50 for their return, as she is worrying herself sick about them.

"Believing that you will appreciate

PACKAGE containing ring, received; reward: \$50. In East 23d st.

EXHIBIT-5.

the situation, and aid me in having the rings returned as quickly as possible, I am, Very truly yours."

Mr. Davidson, in writing the above, had two alternatives in mind—first, that possibly he had not offered money enough as reward, and second, to have the check cashed, so that he could locate the party with whom he was communicating.

He received an answer six days later, September 8, postmarked from Newark, N. J., still another locality selected by his correspondent to mail letters from. This letter (exhibit 8) is as follows:

"W. R. Davidson:

"Received your note. Thanks again for the check. Have changed my address and am going to be where it will be impossible for me to see the *Herald* or any other paper, so kindly stop all communication with me, as they will be entirely useless.

"So that you may know I am the one with whom you have been in correspondence, I repeat the adv. you enclosed me.

"If you prefer (mentioning error in advertisement) cash, will pay three hundred dollars for other two rings. W. R. D.

"If I have any trouble about the check for \$25 I'll write you again. Otherwise this is the last you'll ever hear from me."

Beginning the Search.

Here was the stone wall—communication ceased, no clues, no rings, a dismal outlook for the amateur detective. Mr. Davidson wrote the following merely to sustain communication:

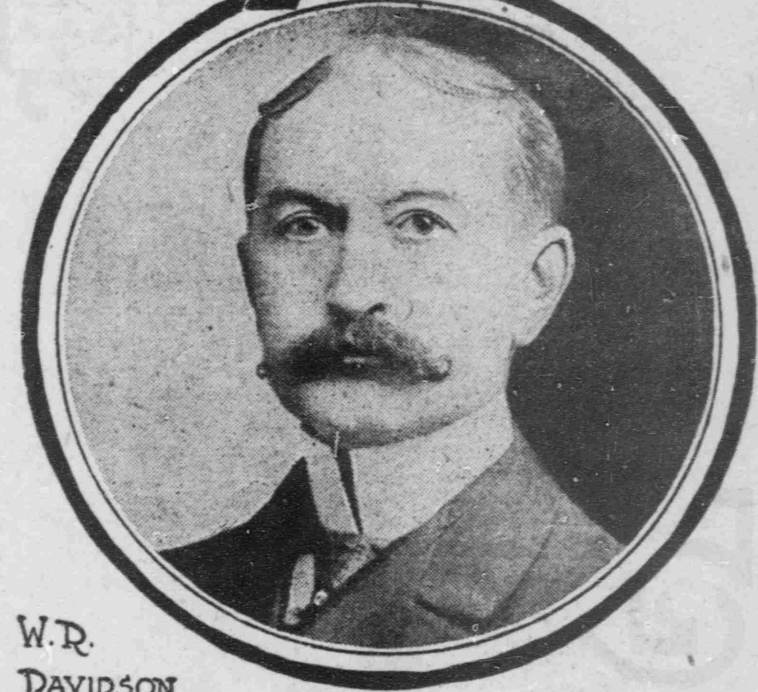
New York, Sept. 9, 1903.

"E. Marston, care of Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Me.

"From your letter just received I am of the opinion that you may have some doubts as to my sincerity with reference to the proposition and the check sent, and so would say that if you wish, I will forward the cash, and after you receive same, then you can return me the check sent.

"Very truly yours."

No answer to this letter was received.



W.R.
DAVIDSON

so on September 14 the following letter was sent. This was intended to satisfy the holders of the rings and bring immediate response:

New York, Sept. 14, '03.

"E. Marston, care of Mrs. Farrell, — Harbor, Me.

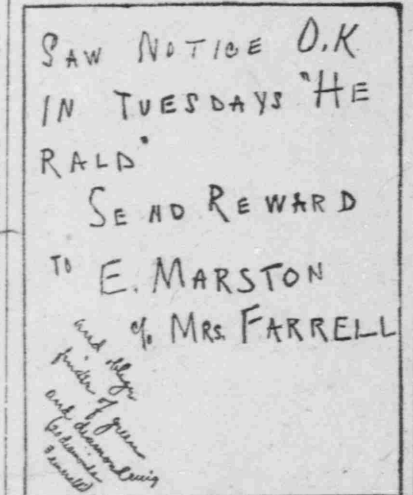
"If this letter reaches you, will you not communicate with me once more, as my wife is quite sick over the loss of her engagement ring?

"Am willing to meet any terms for its return.

"Very truly yours."

Apparently, the game was played and the rings sold, for no further word was received.

Curiosity prompted Mr. Davidson to



wrote to the postmaster at the little town in Maine. So this letter was sent September 23:

Postmaster, — Harbor, Me.

"Dear Sir—On Sept. 14 I sent a letter to E. Marston, care of Mrs. Farrell, on the outside of the envelope that if the letter was not delivered in five days for the same to be returned. Kindly advise me if the letter has been delivered or if it still remains in your office, and oblige.

"Yours very truly."

The postmaster's answer, exhibit 9, is as follows:

Harbor, Me., Sept. 24, '03.

"W. R. Davidson: "Dear Sir—Mr. Farrell has a box in this office and all mail for Miss Marston was put in that, so we do not know whether the letter you refer to was received here or not, as she left no address. We will inquire of Mrs. Farrell. Respectfully, (Signed) "P. M."

In the meantime Mr. Davidson had been watching his bank for the return of the twenty-five dollar check. He had about given it up when it arrived.

Puzzled by a Check.

The back of the check showed the endorsement of E. Marston and the stamp of a trust company in a small New Jersey town.

(The names of the town and the bank are held back for obvious reasons.) Mr. Davidson immediately went to the bank and explained matters to its president.

Upon looking over their books they discovered the remarkable fact that they had no depositor named E. Marston, yet that was the endorsement on the check, and it had been cashed beyond doubt at their bank.

The craftiness of the holder of the ring became even more apparent. Another point developed: either some person in the bank was party to the ring job or had been particularly negligent in his duty, wilfully or otherwise.

The New York Clearing House stamp on the back of the check showed that it had been received there September 9; therefore it must have been cashed in New Jersey the day before.

A careful examination of the books disclosed one twenty-five-dollar check. It had been presented by a butcher, but suffice it to say that this check was soon accounted for.

Mr. Davidson had once more come face to face with the wall. To be defeated in this manner when a solution seemed so near was more than disconcerting. While scrutinizing the back of the check he discovered a letter "S" faintly traced in lead pencil. It promised little, but, nevertheless, was not to be overlooked.

Clew in the Letter "S."

The next day he returned to the bank for his answer. If ever he found it, it had to be found in this Jersey town.

Upon seeing the "S" the bank president exclaimed: "Why, that sheds some light; it is the mark of our Special Savings Department."

Examination of the Savings Department books revealed no such sum as \$25, however.

In this latest hour of gloom a thought passed through Mr. Davidson's brain that ultimately solved the whole question. The thought was absolutely an accident.

"Is it possible," he asked, "that some item a little under twenty-five dollars could give a clew to the mystery?"

So they looked again and found an entry of twenty-four dollars. This transaction seemed so near was more than disconcerting. While scrutinizing the back of the check he discovered a letter "S" faintly traced in lead pencil. It promised little, but, nevertheless, was not to be overlooked.

"This check was deposited by a young lady of most excellent family—Miss May Morgan. I don't think it can possibly be of any assistance," said the bank president.

Mr. Davidson, however, went to the local police headquarters and got a detective.

Now Mr. Davidson had a recollection of some of the passengers, among them one young lady whom he described to the detective. His description fitted Miss Morgan exactly.

They now became convinced that they were on the right track. The two detectives repaired to a small hotel and wrote a note, asking the young lady to join them in a good time. It was signed "As ever, George."

This was sent by a messenger, but the young lady was not at home.

The next morning the detective waited across the street from the house. When Miss Morgan came out he followed her. He established the fact that she worked in a millinery shop in the town.

Now came the difficulty of proving that Miss Morgan and E. Marston were one and the same.

Theater Ticket Trap.

After mature deliberation Mr. Davidson decided that, could he get her signature, a comparison with the signature on the check might do much toward simplifying the identification.

Calling in one of the young women stenographers in his office, he took her into his confidence.

"Now you rig yourself up as much like an actress as possible and go over to this millinery store and see if you can get this young lady's signature," said he.

The next afternoon the impromptu actress called at the millinery store.

"Is Miss Morgan in?" she asked.

"No, but she will be, in a few min-



T.R.